

Nordisk Komité

Konference 22.–24. September 2006

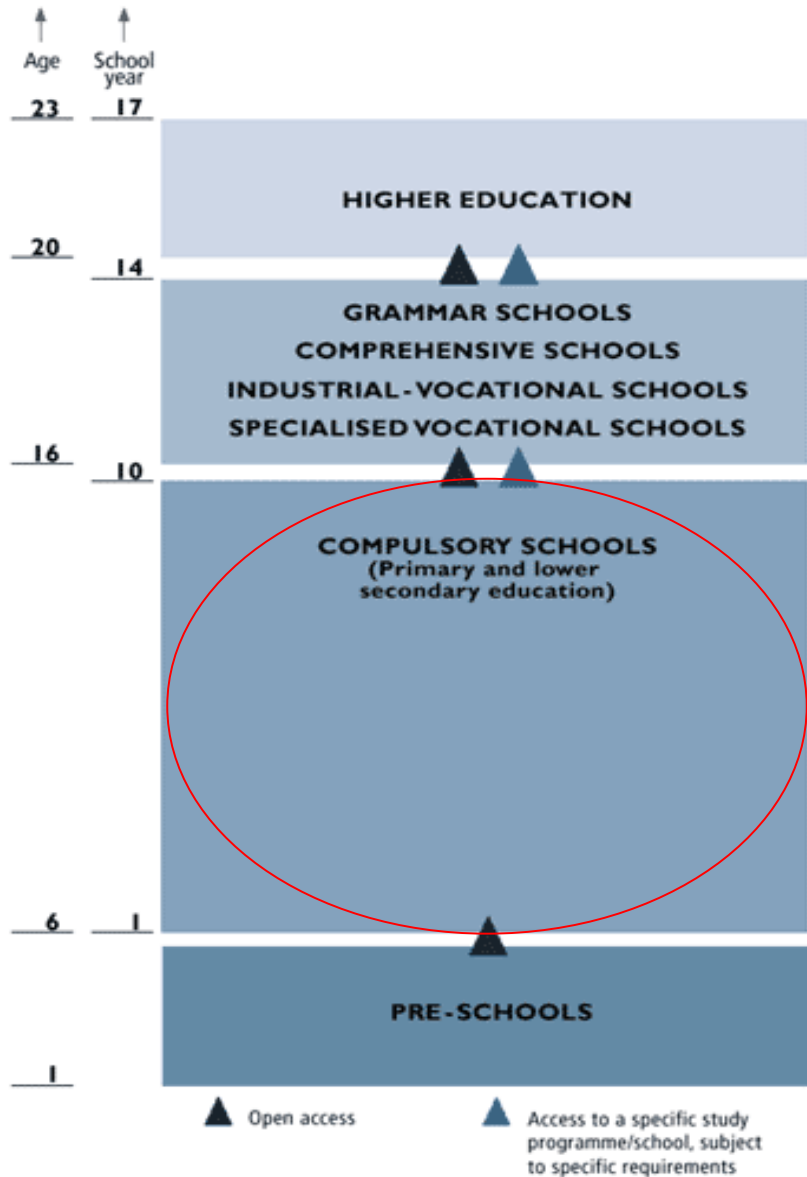
Nationally co-ordinated tests in Iceland: A critical view

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THE ICELANDIC SCHOOL SYSTEM



- Students from 6–16
- Run by local authorities
- Primary grades 1–7
- Lower secondary grades 8–10

The National Curriculum ...

- ❖ Around 900 pages in 12 separate booklets
- ❖ Prescriptive in terms of learning aims and objectives but more flexible in terms of methods
- ❖ Three sets of intended outcomes
 - Final outcomes – broad aims
 - Intermediate objectives (grade 4 and 7)
 - Learning targets for each year

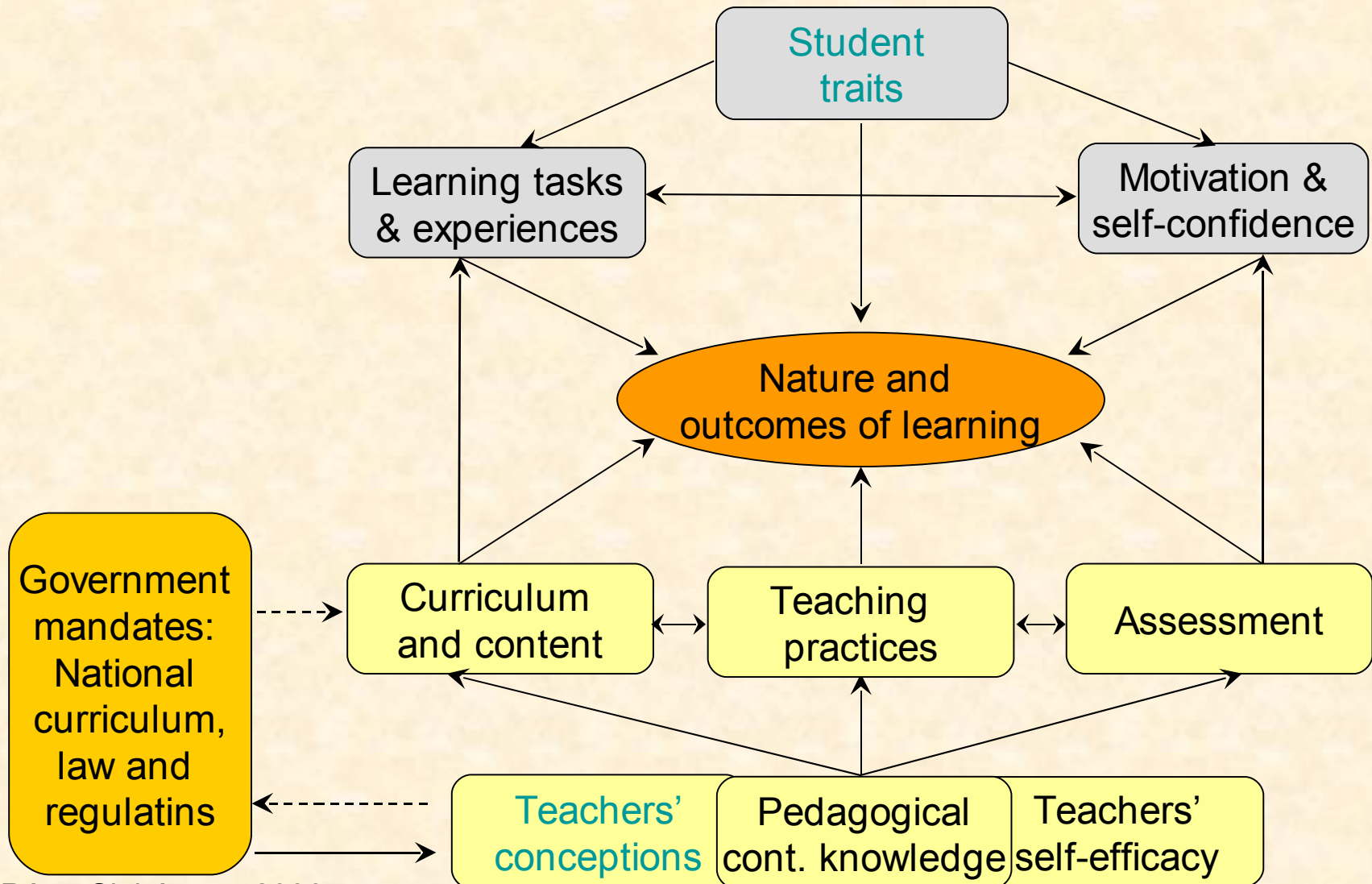
National examinations

- ❖ Grades 4 and 7
 - Icelandic and Maths
- ❖ Grade 10 (end of compulsory school)
 - Icelandic, Maths, English, Danish, Social studies and Natural sciences
- ❖ Not standardised (semi-standardised)
 - National tests (Nationally co-ordinated)

Questions

- ❖ What are the purposes of National tests?
 - Who wants / needs them and what for?
- ❖ How do National tests fit into what we know about effective teaching and learning
- ❖ What is the effect on teaching and learning in schools?

An overview of teaching and learning



Student traits

❖ Readiness

- how ready and well prepared each student is to engage in what the teacher is planning for him / her

❖ Interest

- what each student enjoys learning, thinking about and doing

❖ Learning profile

- in what way each student likes to engage in the learning process

(Tomlinson, 1999)

Teachers' conceptions

Teachers' own beliefs and ideas about themselves as teachers, the nature of teaching and learning and the purposes of learning and what should be the outcomes of learning

(Brown, 2002)

Pedagogical content knowledge

... represents the blend of teachers' knowledge about their subjects and their pedagogical knowledge and skills to teach those subjects to their intended outcomes

(Guðmundsdóttir, 1991)

Teachers' self-efficacy beliefs

Their conviction or belief in their ability to influence how well students learn or perform

(Goddard, Hoy and Hoy, 2004)

WYTIWYG: What you test is what you get

- ❖ Teachers have a strong tendency to teach what they think or know will be tested
- ❖ Teachers have the same tendency not to teach what they think or know will not be tested

(Linn og Miller, 2005)

Two types of assessment

❖ Assessment OF learning

- for the purpose of bureaucratic accountability where outcomes are tested at the end of the learning process

❖ Assessment FOR learning

- for the purpose of professional accountability where data on student learning is gathered and used for direct efforts to improve teaching and learning and internal conditions in schools

(Barber og Fullan, 2005)

Assessment and the curriculum

- ❖ National testing = assessment OF learning rather than assessment FOR learning
- ❖ High-stakes nature
 - publication of results
- ❖ Comparison
- ❖ Multiple-choice
 - measurable information and surface learning vs. higher order thinking, problem solving and deep learning

Student traits

❖ The paradox

- Treat everybody equally vs. responding to individual differences

❖ The pressure of high-stakes tests

- reject more students
- ineffective reactions to learning difficulties

(Shepard, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 1997)

Motivation and self-confidence

- ❖ High-stakes tests as motivators of
 - students who win?
 - students who struggle?
 - students who fail?
- ❖ The mistaken assumption about motivation
 - High-stakes assessment OF learningOR
 - progressive, stimulating teaching, assessment FOR learning and success

(Stiggins, 2004)

Black and William (2001)

What is needed is a culture of success, backed by a belief that all can achieve. Formative assessment (assessment for learning) can be a powerful weapon here if it is communicated in the right way. Whilst it can help all pupils, it gives particularly good results with low achievers where it concentrates on specific problems with their work, and gives them both a clear understanding of what is wrong and achievable targets for putting it right. ... Feedback to any pupil should be about the particular qualities of his or her work with advise on what he or she can do to improve, and should avoid comparisons with other pupils

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